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URBAN PERFORMANCE BETWEEN THE IMAGINED, THE MEASURED, AND THE EXPERIENCED

Ashraf M. Salama and David Grierson

A multitude of diverse attributes is required for effective urban performance at various scales ranging from the immediate context of public buildings to central urban spaces, and from urban corridors to residential neighbourhoods. Following their earlier works (GRIERSON, 2014; MUNRO and GRIERSON, 2016; SALAMA, 2011; SALAMA and WIEDMANN, 2013; and SALAMA et al., 2016) the guest editors frame these qualities under a cycle of three main symbiotic pillars: the imagined, the measured, and the experienced, which contribute to the development of insights that elucidate various parameters for exploring urban performance. These three pillars stem from the Lefebvrian arguments and his theory on the production of space, which postulates a triadic relationship of three different but related types of spaces: the conceived (Imagined), the perceived (measured) and the lived (experienced).

Primarily, Lefebvre defined 'conceived space' as the space which is theorised by scientists and planners, known as 'representations of space', representations that are intangible and are entrenched in the principles, imperatives, beliefs and visions of experts, decision makers, and those who are in a position to impose their personal notion of 'order' onto concrete reality. The second is 'perceived space', the space of 'spatial practice' defined as the space where movement and interaction takes place, where networks develop and materialise. Consequently, it includes both daily routines at an individual level and urban realities such as the networks that link places designated for work, leisure and 'private' life (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p. 38). The third is 'lived space', which is explained as the unconscious, non-verbal direct relation between people and space. This is the space that is occupied through associated images and symbols (LEFEBVRE, 1991, p. 39). The current body of knowledge on Lefebvre's work suggests that the 'conceived space' is abstract and tactical and where authority functions, the 'perceived space' is a pragmatic, physical space encompassing flows of investment, workforce, and information and that this where the conceived and lived spaces are construed. Salama and Wiedmann (2013) suggest that the 'lived space' is the most subjective space, involving the actual experience of individuals that is performed in the 'perceived space' and as a result of the 'conceived space'.

In our call for papers, the premise was that contributions to this issue of Open House International (OHI) would address the way in which decision-making processes, led by policy makers and discipline experts, contribute to successful urban environments; how the social and spatial practices of key actors (investors, developers, and users) manifest diverse urban activities; and how users attach to places and identify with their surroundings as a basis for social and spatial justice. Contributions were expected to address one of the three pillars while offering implications on the other two. In response we have received more than 40 abstracts, and subsequently identified 19 for further development into full papers towards submission for review. The outcome of a rigorous review process concluded with the identification of 11 papers published in this issue. Addressing various contexts in Europe and the Middle East, the papers represent diverse efforts undertaken by committed scholars in universities and academic institutions in Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Libya, Qatar, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Strikingly, the papers published in this issue address the distinct qualities of urban performance at various scales. At a regional scale, El-Kholei and Yassine (2019) examine efforts towards developing smart and sustainable cities (SSC) in the Arab region. They argue, and rightly so, that first things come first, and that a sustainable city is not attainable in the presence of an illiteracy and poverty that characterise different parts of the Arab world. Their study reveals that governance within these cities tends to focus on dimensions of smart environment, smart living, and smart economy. They conclude that building SSC requires careful preparation and collaboration with numerous stakeholders, including institutions, organisations, communities, and the general public. Such initiatives should address essential

elements pertaining to inclusive economic development, social justice, and environmental protection. On the other hand, at a city scale, Yaprak Öz and Demirkan (2019) propose an ontology-based approach that provides a framework as a strategic decision support mechanism for effective urban service design. Through various analyses their research is conducted in two phases, the first identifies the priority list for service design and the second is a qualitative research addressing the public service providers and focusing on 'adequate community support and health services' for an age friendly city which was the top priority in phase one. Their work calls for the need for a shared understanding and appreciation of what a service is and what constitutes it among service providers and consumers.

Quality of life (UOL) and Quality of Urban Life (QUOL) appear to characterise urban performance discourse in two papers. At an urban setting scale, MacLean and Salama (2019) raise questions about the quality of life (QOL) of residents and the liveability of their environments in non-Western contexts. They argue that the preponderance of existing empirical studies and measurement frameworks have been developed based on Western standards. They propose a multi-dimensional, context specific model based on the premise that QOUL studies should balance universal values and context-specificities. Following critique of selected QOUL models, their work calls for the important role that context and culture play in urban life while accentuating the relevant core dimensions of QOUL studies. It is this context specificity that emerges in the study of Gür, Taneli, and Dostoğlu (2019), which is also conducted at an urban setting scale. They develop a conceptual model and validate it through its implementation in the context of Doğanbey in Bursa, an area identified as representing an urban transformation implemented according to administrative decisions. The work involves detecting measurements that reflect people's evaluations, their adaptation to post-transformation environment, and utilising qualitative methods including in-depth interviews and attitude surveys. The work of Gur et al. (2019) appears to be a response to the call made by MacLean and Salama (2019) where the findings suggest that the lack of residents' voice has a direct impact on the level of satisfaction, and that an urban transformation conducted without user participation is not effective. The two papers put people or the public at the crux of their arguments. Yet, while the work of MacLean and Salama speaks more to researchers and scholars, the work of Gur et al. speaks directly to both research and decision makers.

In two very different contexts; Ankara, Turkey and Basra, Iraq, walkability, including attitudes towards walking, and walking behaviour, is the focus of two papers by Seles and Afacan (2019) and Al-Saraify and Grierson (2019). The work of Seles and Afacan (2019) calls for expanding the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by including attributes that pertain to a healthy urban performance of residential neighbourhoods as an additional predictor for walking behaviour. In the context of Ankara, Turkey, their study explored the correlations between walkability attributes and walkability behaviour through a survey conducted with residents. Their findings maintain that a walkability model based on the three constructs of TPB should not neglect the measured and the experienced urban performance. It also postulates that utilising pedestrian environment for walking as fully as possible requires a collaborative, an experiential approach, and a multi-parameter decision-making process.

The work of Al-Saraify and Grierson (2019) places emphasis on walking to occupational activities by advocating the need for a reliable subjective instrument to gather information on walking to occupational activities on the neighbourhood scale. NWOAQ, Neighbourhood Walking to Occupational Activities Questionnaire, was developed as a data collection mechanism backed by indicators stemming from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). NWOAQ was validated and tested in three different neighbourhoods in Basra City, Iraq. The testing delineates, statically, that NWOAQ provides an effective instrument as an individual level of measurement. This is due to the generation of appropriate and relevant qualities and quantities of dependent and independent variables, which involve the application of various levels of measurement to gather information that pertain to walking to occupational activities. Recognising urban ecology as a systems-based approach NWOAQ is viewed as a responsive mechanism that captures data effectively and enables a comprehensive understanding of walkability in the city.

The work of van Riel and Salama (2019) argues that the current period, characterised by transnational migration within cities and also between nations, has made narratives of belonging and exclusion more relevant than ever. They unveil various aspects of belonging and exclusion in the context of Accra, Ghana, with a focus on its Youth. They examine young people's 'lived' experience of urban spaces through the use of auto-photography as an appropriate method relevant to the investigation. In this context, the proposition is that auto-photography is less intrusive than direct observation and therefore well equipped to allow the 'insider' view into personal experiences and perceptions of place that are otherwise difficult to access and study. Their work represents a call for urban professionals and decision makers to produce inclusive urban environments that cater for all while allowing for differences and belonging to co-exist. Addressing the notion of 'spatialising' belonging and exclusion they argue that fundamental to the understanding of voices of marginalised groups is the development of progressive modes of designing and managing public space that contribute to social sustainability.

Leandro (2019) presents his paper as part of PROHABIT research project. Examining three neighbourhoods in Barcelona, the work conveys that the residents of these neighbourhoods in the city of Barcelona—Trinitat Nova, Plus Ultra and Vallcarca— have struggled against the threat of radical urban renewals planned by the municipal authorities for decades. In response, his work reveals that insights into the need to create a holistic understanding of today's urban environment, and how architects and planners need to develop skills and methods to enable them to form part of the open and participatory planning systems. It is clearly evident that this work attempts to bridge the gap between the imagined, the measured, and the lived. In wider scope Leandro calls for trans-disciplinary thinking the boundaries between social sciences and design disciplines are clearly crossed.

Focusing on the scale of urban open spaces, two papers advocate structured methods to gather qualitative information through assessment approaches. Utilising similar tactics in terms of tools and the types of issues explored the papers of Remali and Abudib (2019) and Gharib (2019) examine various qualities and attributes of urban open spaces in two dramatically different contexts in Libya and Qatar. The work of Remali and Abudib (2019) cross-examines the characteristics of six different neighbourhoods within the city of Tripoli and establishes a profile for each, focusing on the way in which key principles and values are perceived. Using defined indicators, the study explores the spatial typology of these neighbourhoods. Assessing functional, social and perceptual attributes through the use of a structured walking tour assessment procedure, their findings corroborate the absence of landscape features, such as greenery elements and appropriate street furniture, as well as the absence of adequate facilities or designated playing areas for children. Remali and Abudib call for assessing existing residential districts as a step towards effective regeneration of existing neighbourhoods or creating new ones.

Likewise, Gharib's work scrutinizes the qualities of urban open spaces of two traditional markets in Qatar by conducting behavioural mapping and impressionistic assessment procedures. His work reveals the variations of urban open spaces in the historic markets of Doha and Al Wakra cities and investigates the efficiency of use in both. Despite the massive urban developments that took place in Doha, there is a widespread shortage of open spaces in Qatar. Yet, Souq Waqif and Souq Al Wakra became very successful destinations through embracing the traditional architectural style. This special character makes both markets equally attractive and memorable. Both markets are easily accessible and have vast parking areas designated to host the continually growing number of visitors. Gharib's work divulges that Souq Waqif in Doha scored higher in the assessment of functional, social, and perceptual attributes than Souq Al-Wakra. The behavioural observations demonstrated that both markets are safe, welcoming, and accommodating for their users' needs. Souq Waqif, however, promotes engaging social experiences due to its efficient management, the spatial diversity, and the variety of commercial activities.

An action oriented, practice-based activity, the work of Akmaral Yussupova et al. (2019) conceives a new master plan and investigates the gradually emerging use of ornamental art in the landscape design of Kazakhstan Their work explores the impact of symbolism on the quality of new urban environments. This is undertaken through an inventory analysis of the

existing recreational facilities in Kazakhstan with three purposes, the first is to establish their symbolic meaning, the second is to assess the level of utilisation of symbolic ornaments, and the third is to examine the socio-economic factors that influence the design of landscape elements. The outcome of this multi-layered procedure conveys that symbolic meanings of the ornaments stem from historic, legal and cultural traditions of different ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, further arguing that topography as well as traditional symbolism and numerology are generators of the urban landscape of the city of Shykment, Kazakhstan. Therefore, their work suggests that despite the lack of identity and inconsistency in the design of large-scale landscape projects, contextually meaningful urban planning would materialise the potential of creative opportunities in the city.

The conceptual, empirical, and action based undertakings carried out to develop the papers published in this issue demonstrate effective endeavours to address urban performance at various scales. The diversity, plurality, and multiplicity of the issues explored reveal the complexity and the wide spectrum of qualities required to comprehend urban performance. The imagined urban performance is evident in the work of Yussupova et al. (2019) through the provision of a responsive master plan. However, the measured and lived performance types are also implicit in their call for understanding symbolism and meanings as they relate to various traditions of cultural groups in Kazakhstan and as part of a responsive planning process. On the other hand, speaking to decision makers in cities of the Arab region with the respect to the development of smart and sustainable cities (SSCs), the work of El-Kholei and Yassine (2019) addresses the measured urban performance by calling for careful preparation and collaboration with stakeholders, including institutions, organisations, communities, and the general public. Still, it implicitly advocates the need for the experienced urban performance by depicting concerns related to social justice and participatory democracy. Similarly, the proposition of Yaprak Öz and Demirkan (2019) to develop and validate a framework as a strategic decision making tool for urban service design seems to speak to the measured urban performance. Yet, their emphasis on health and age friendly contexts manifests the implications of the measured on the experienced.

It is promising to see that the experienced urban performance is the focus of all other papers. This is a subject that has been marginalised for decades and has recently gained considerable interest and attention of scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds. A clear manifestation of this interest is evident in the work of Leandro (2019) when he argues that: *“... we have undertaken an interdisciplinary study, involving architects-planners and social and environmental psychologists, to understand the process of construction of a sense of community and place identity in three neighbourhoods. The study has highlighted the need to overcome the divisions between social sciences and design disciplines, between the real world of experience and the abstract world of design thinking.”* By calling for a context specific quality of urban life models and frameworks, MacLean and Salama (2019) place emphasis exclusively on the experienced urban performance and the users involved. Yet, while putting people and the lived experiences at the core of their argument, the work Gur et al. (2019) addresses both the measured and the experienced urban performance by developing a conceptual model within the context of the interactions between human behaviour and the environment and implementing it with results directed to decision makers. Urban performance related to lived experiences is evident in a) the work Seles and Afacan (2019) and Al-Saraify and Grierson (2019) where the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is utilised through the use of responsive information gathering mechanisms in Ankara and Basra respectively, b) the work of van Riel and Salama (2019) whose work unveils various aspects of youth's belonging and exclusion in the context of Accra, Ghana, c) the work Remali and Abudib (2019) and Gharib (2019) whose work is based on assessing functional, social, and perceptual attributes of urban open spaces utilising similar tools in Libya and Qatar respectively.

While all the papers successfully address key aspects of urban performance, the challenge remains; the clarity in articulating the implications – how the qualities underlying one of the three pillars -- the conceived (imagined), the perceived (measured) and the lived (experienced) – have implications on the other two. Notably, the three pillars function as parts of a cycle. The results of the study into the lived (individual experiences of the environment) and the perceived (networks and flows) should feed back into the conceived (policies and

strategies and visions) again. In many cases, the lived and the perceived are an outcome of a non-responsive conceived, and the cycle will do well when implications are advanced with in-depth interpretations and articulations.

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